

**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**

**A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE  
IN A DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTRE  
IN HONG KONG**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

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**BY**

**ALFRED WAI KEUNG MAK**

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## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfred Wai-keung MAK', written over a horizontal line.

Alfred Wai-keung MAK

10 March, 2010

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## **Dedication**

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## **Abstract**

This is a study about institutional change and development. In the form of a case study, the present study investigated the circumstances under which a closed institution, a drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation centre in Hong Kong, experienced transformational change amidst adverse contextual conditions. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses of data obtained from three research instruments, including a 'Focus Group' and 'Individual Interviews', and a purposely designed questionnaire survey on staff samples, the study aimed to generate a deep and precise understanding of how transformational leadership impacted on the change and development of an institution characterised by an entrenched culture and environmental constraints.

The data provided in this study gave support to past literature that institutional culture impacted significantly on the force of change and might give ground for status quo and resistance to change. The study further suggested that, depending on the intensity of the driving force for change, overcoming resistance was possible, with speed of change determined by leadership quality and contextual factors. This result was supportive of the 'Force Theory' as espoused by earlier researchers such as Lewin (1950), Beckard and Harris (1987).

While revealing the close inter-relationship between the leader and change strategy, and between change strategy and outcome, the present study observed that individual differences played an important part in the makeup of transformational leadership. The study identified some specific characteristics that were consistent with transformational leadership contended by Bass (1978). Empirical evidence of the study further indicated that any leader desiring to achieve institutional change of a transformational nature should possess two sets of leadership attributes – i) competence in professional skills and knowledge, and ii) personal qualities facilitative of team-work, stakeholders' support and effective practices in a given context. The study in the end argued that without strong attributes of the second set, the success of the change programme could be severely discounted due to leadership inadequacy.

The study ended by suggesting a framework of transformational change for reference of change leaders in particularly institutions of similar nature.

Limited by the nature of case study, the present study is by no means an attempt to present a generalized phenomenon. It is however hoped that this empirical study on a site with little public attention would provoke the interest of concerned parties and academics to further explore the multi-faceted experience of institutional change and transformational leadership in different types of institutions.